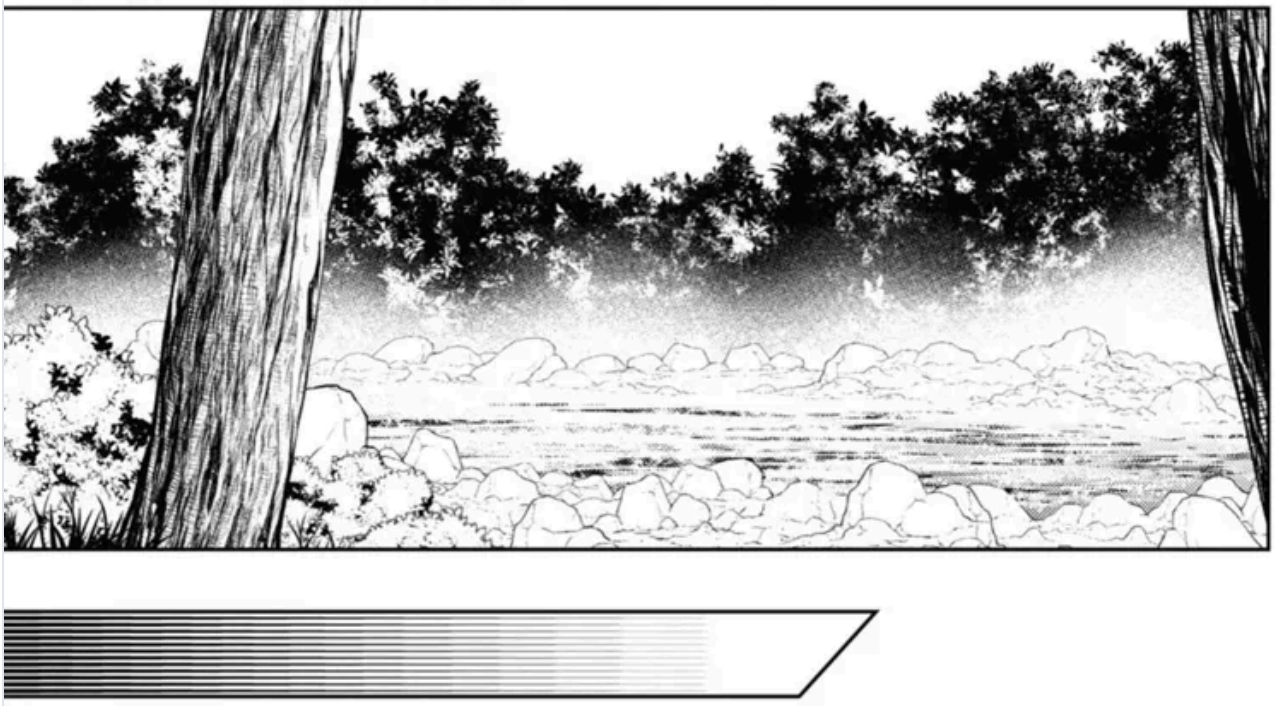
Chapter 63 The Hunt ③



PRESS
PRESS
NGH!

PHEW!
KOFF!
KOFF!
BLERGH!
...I COULD HAVE SWUM THAT...
...THERE'S NO WAY...
I'M SORRY IF YOU COULDN'T SWIM.
I THOUGHT YOU'D LOST YOUR MIND.
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE JUMPED OFF A NEARLY 50-METER-HIGH CLIFF LIKE A MADMAN.

AH YES, AS LONG AS WE DIDN'T DROWN.
.....
GLARE
I KNEW THE BASIN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WATERFALL WAS DEEP...
...SO I FIGURED WE WOULDN'T DIE IF I JUMPED HIGH ENOUGH... AS LONG AS WE DIDN'T DROWN.
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING ?!
UNDRESS
MY CLOTHES FEEL SO HEAVY FROM THE WATER.

I'M SORRY, I KNOW THIS IS INDECENT, BUT I'LL END UP CATCHING A COLD AT THIS RATE.
I'LL WRING OUT YOUR CLOTHES TOO, SO PLEASE TAKE THEM OFF.
/10
HRUSTLE
I GUESS I SHOULD KEEP MY UNDER-GARMENTS ON.
I'D LIKE TO AT LEAST RETAIN A MODICUM OF MODESTY.
ALL THE HERBS I HAD ON HAND GOT DRENCHED TOO, SO THEY'RE UNUSABLE NOW.
FWUMP

BUT I CAN'T LEAVE HIM STANDING AROUND UNDRESSED SINCE HE'S OF A HIGHER POSITION THAN I AM.
YOU CAN DO MINE AFTER. TEND TO YOUR OWN CLOTHES FIRST.
WRIING
YANK
WELL, HE'S STRONG ENOUGH, SO I SUPPOSE HE'S MORE EFFICIENT AT IT THAN ME.
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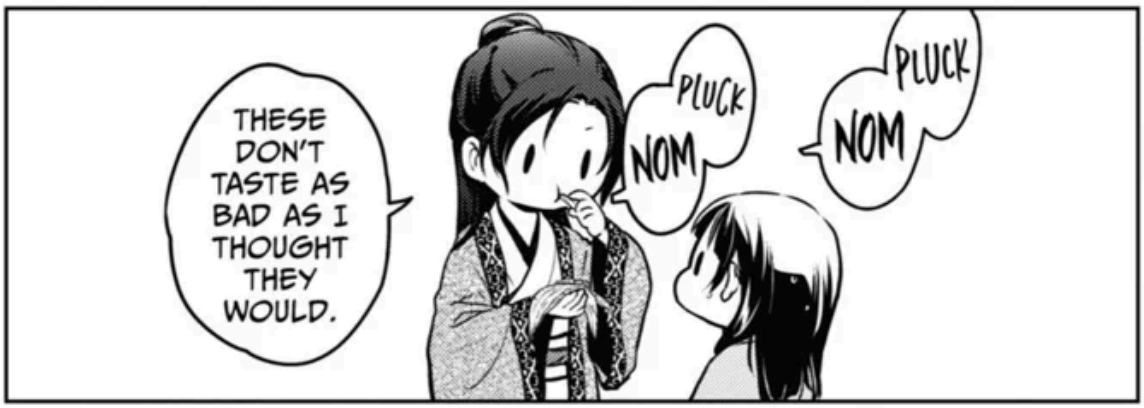
WE'RE BEHIND THE WATER-FALL.
IS THIS A CAVE?
NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW OF ITS LOCATION.
AN OFFICIAL I PLAYED WITH HERE A LONG TIME AGO...
...TOLD ME IT'S USED AS A TEST OF COURAGE.
HUH, HE KNOWS A LOT ABOUT THIS PLACE.
HE SEEMS TO BE DOING BETTER NOW, BUT...

OH, HERE THEY ARE.
THANK GOOD-NESS THEY DIDN'T GET WET.
SIR JINSHI.
I KNOW THIS ISN'T MUCH COMPARED TO THE LAVISH FEAST FROM EARLIER, BUT WOULD YOU LIKE TO EAT THIS?
IS THAT SOME KIND OF MEDICINE OR SOME-THING?
NO, IT'S THE BUTTERBUR SPROUTS THAT WERE SERVED WITH BREAK-FAST.
I WAS PLANNING TO HAVE THESE AS A SNACK LATER.
SALT?
BUT I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE THEM INSTEAD, SINCE YOU SEEM TO BE LACKING IN SALT RIGHT NOW.
WHEN I FOL-LOWED YOU...
...I HAD A CONTAINER FILLED WITH WATER MIXED WITH SALT AND SUGAR...
...BUT I THINK I LOST IT IN THE FALL.

AND PEOPLE HAVE DIED WITHOUT AT LEAST HAVING SOME WATER.
...HIS BODY MUST HAVE BEEN FEELING IT BECAUSE HE HADN'T HAD ANYTHING TO EAT OR DRINK.
AFTER HUNTING UNDER A BLAZING SUN WITH THAT MASK ON...

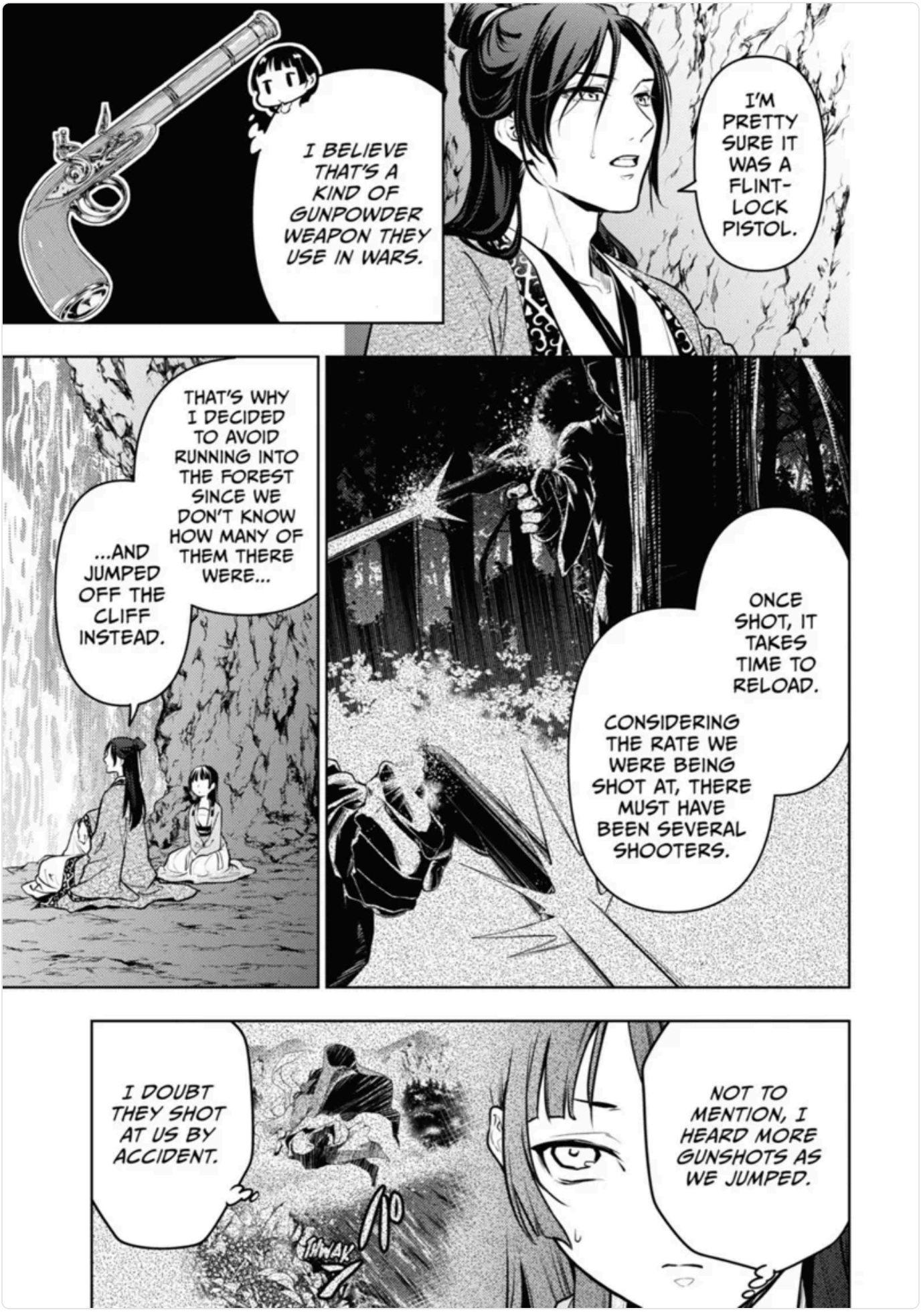
IF YOU SAY SO.
PRESS
DID YOU HAVE A HEADACHE FROM THE HEAT AND BEING DE-HYDRATED?
IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE NOT FEELING DIZZY ANYMORE...
...BUT YOU SHOULD AT LEAST HAVE SOMETHING SALTY, JUST IN CASE.


THESE DON'T TASTE AS BAD AS I THOUGHT THEY WOULD.
PLUCK
NOM
PLUCK
NOM

I'M GLAD THEY'RE TO YOUR...
... LIKING.
PFFFT!
HEY, I CAN'T HELP IT.
I'M THE TYPE TO EAT SMALL MEALS AND THEN GET HUNGRY AGAIN SOON AFTER.
ALSO, SERVANTS HAVE TO EAT AFTER ALL THE IMPORTANT PEOPLE DO.

すっ SHP
SULK
イスッ
THANK YOU.
MUNCH
パク
PLUCK

SOMETIMES HE ACTS LIKE SUCH A KID.
LICK
THWAK
LSSSSH
...WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THAT THING?


I BELIEVE THAT'S A KIND OF GUNPOWDER WEAPON THEY USE IN WARS.
I'M PRETTY SURE IT WAS A FLINT-LOCK PISTOL.
THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO AVOID RUNNING INTO THE FOREST SINCE WE DON'T KNOW HOW MANY OF THEM THERE WERE...
...AND JUMPED OFF THE CLIFF INSTEAD.
ONCE SHOT, IT TAKES TIME TO RELOAD.
CONSIDERING THE RATE WE WERE BEING SHOT AT, THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SEVERAL SHOOTERS.
I DOUBT THEY SHOT AT US BY ACCIDENT.
THWAK
NOT TO MENTION, I HEARD MORE GUNSHOTS AS WE JUMPED.

...BUT THEN AGAIN ...
...I'M THE ONE WHO TOOK HIM SOMEWHERE HE COULD BE TARGETED.
KRNCH
I MADE HIM EASY PREY BY TAKING HIM FAR AWAY FROM THE VILLA.
THIS IS ALL MY FAULT.
HE SEEMS TO BE OF FAR HIGHER STANDING THAN I'D IMAGINED.
I SURE WISH HE WOULD KEEP ME OUT OF SUCH BOTHERSOME AFFAIRS THOUGH.

THE SMALL-ANIMAL BONES LITTERING THE CAVE TELL ME...
...THAT IT'S ONE THING TO GET BEHIND THE WATER-FALL...
...BUT BECAUSE OF THE RUSHING CURRENT, IT'S NOT AS EASY TO LEAVE.
SIR JINSHI, DO YOU KNOW HOW WE CAN GET OUT OF HERE?
WE CAN JUST SWIM THROUGH THE BASIN.
...I DON'T THINK I CAN.
I'M NOT A VERY GOOD SWIMMER.
DEEPER IN THE CAVE, THERE'S ALSO A HOLE IN THE CEILING THAT LETS YOU OUT CLOSE TO THE VILLA.
THOSE WHO JUMP OFF THE WATERFALL AS PART OF THE TEST OF COURAGE ...
...ARE USUALLY PULLED BACK OUT FROM THERE.
DOES SIR GAO SHUN KNOW ABOUT IT?

I THINK BA SEN WOULD KNOW...
...BUT HE CAN BE SO SINGLE-MINDED, I DOUBT HE'D THINK TO CHECK THERE.
BUT HE WOULD KNOW WHERE TO FIND US IF WE HAD A WAY OF CONTACTING HIM.
.....
PROBABLY NOT, SINCE HE HATED IT WHEN I DID THESE KINDS OF THINGS.
SO HE MUST'VE SNUCK AWAY AND COME HERE BEHIND GAO SHUN'S BACK BEFORE.
SINCE JINSHI'S STRONG, HE MAY BE ABLE TO SWIM TO THE OTHER SIDE JUST FINE.
BUT IT'D BE TOO DANGEROUS IF THE SHOOTERS ARE STILL LOOKING FOR HIM AROUND THE BASIN.
ヒュウウウ...
WHOOOO

PERHAPS WE COULD SHOUT FOR HELP?
NO ONE WOULD BE ABLE TO HEAR US UNLESS THEY'RE ALREADY PRETTY CLOSE.
BUT IF WE KEPT AT IT ALL DAY, IT COULD WORK.
FWEEET!
HUSH
ZOOM
ん…?
I GUESS THAT WOULD'VE BEEN TOO MUCH TO HOPE FOR.

GLANCE
チラッ
LOOKS LIKE IT'S ABOUT 270 CENTIMETERS UP.
JINSHI'S GOTTA BE AT LEAST 180, BUT IT'D BE A STRETCH FOR HIM TO REACH EVEN IF HE JUMPED.
I THINK I KNOW WHAT HE'S THINKING.
...STARE
BUT IF YOU WERE ON THE BOTTOM, YOU'D BE CRUSHED.
...THAT I JUMPED OFF HIM.
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO IMAGINE WHAT SUIREN WOULD DO TO ME WERE SHE TO DISCOVER...
ABSOLUTELY NOT! THINK OF OUR POSITIONS!

JUST DO IT.
BUT—
I GUESS IF IT'S AN ORDER...
ARGH!
MAYBE YOU...
...SHOULD CONSIDER PUTTING ON A LITTLE MORE WEIGHT?

THAT'S NOT THE KIND OF THING I WANT TO BE TOLD RIGHT NOW.
IT'S WET AND SLIPPERY HERE...
SLIMY
...BUT IF MY FINGERS CAN FIND PURCHASE ...
I THINK I CAN DO IT.
I— I'M GOING TO STAND UP NOW.
PRESS
GO ON.

HOP
RIBBIT!
NGH!
WOBBLE
AH!
WOBBLE
SLIP
SHAKE
SOME FROG ISN'T ENOUGH!
TO!
HEY!
H...

THWUMP
OW!
OR NOT. I'M FINE, ACTUALLY.
INSTEAD, I SMELL... A FAINT HINT OF INCENSE?

BDMP
BEING SO CLOSE TO HIM LIKE THIS...
BDMP
...I FEEL AS IF I CAN HEAR HIS HEARTBEAT.
BUT...
BDMP
...WHAT REALLY HAS MY ATTENTION IS...

WHAT'S THIS?
SQUISH
にゃ
IS IT THAT FROG?
FEEL
FEEL
BUT IT SEEMS A BIT TOO BIG TO BE ONE.
NN!

S...
SORRY...
...BUT COULD YOU MOVE YOUR HAND?
YOU'RE PUTTING ME IN A BIT OF A PICKLE.
A PICKLE ...?
SQUEEZE

NNGH!
BUT HERE IT IS!
GULP
HOW CAN THIS BE?!
ALL EUNUCHS WHO SET FOOT IN THE INNER COURT DON'T HAVE ONE.
154

.....
.....
スSHP!!
I SUPPOSE THIS SAVES ME SOME TROUBLE, IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING.
GRAB
!!
UNLIKE THE EUNUCHS OF THE COURT, HE HAS THE LEAN AND MUSCULAR PHYSIQUE OF A TRAINED SOLDIER.
I KNEW THAT MUCH.
PERHAPS THAT'S WHY...
...I CONTINUED TO TRY TO PLAY DUMB AND DENY THE FACT...

...MIGHT NOT BE A EUNUCH AFTER ALL.
...THAT THIS MAN WITH A FACE THAT COULD LAUNCH A THOUSAND SHIPS...

...I ASKED YOU TO COME ALONG ON THIS TRIP.
IT'S WHY...
THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO TELL YOU.

I'VE PUT UP WITH ALL KINDS OF BOTHERSOME THINGS THUS FAR...
...BUT IF I BECAME PRIVY TO A SECRET LIKE THAT, I'D HAVE TO TAKE IT TO THE GRAVE.
WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF A MAN WHO'S NOT A EUNUCH...
...GETS ONE OF THE EMPEROR'S CONSORTS PREGNANT?
UH-OH.
I DON'T WANT TO KNOW WHAT HE'S ABOUT TO SAY NEXT.
...DON'T INTEND TO BE THIS FELLOW'S PARTNER IN CRIME FOR THAT LONG!
I'M—
AND I CER-TAINLY...
I THINK I SQUISHED A FROG.
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY.

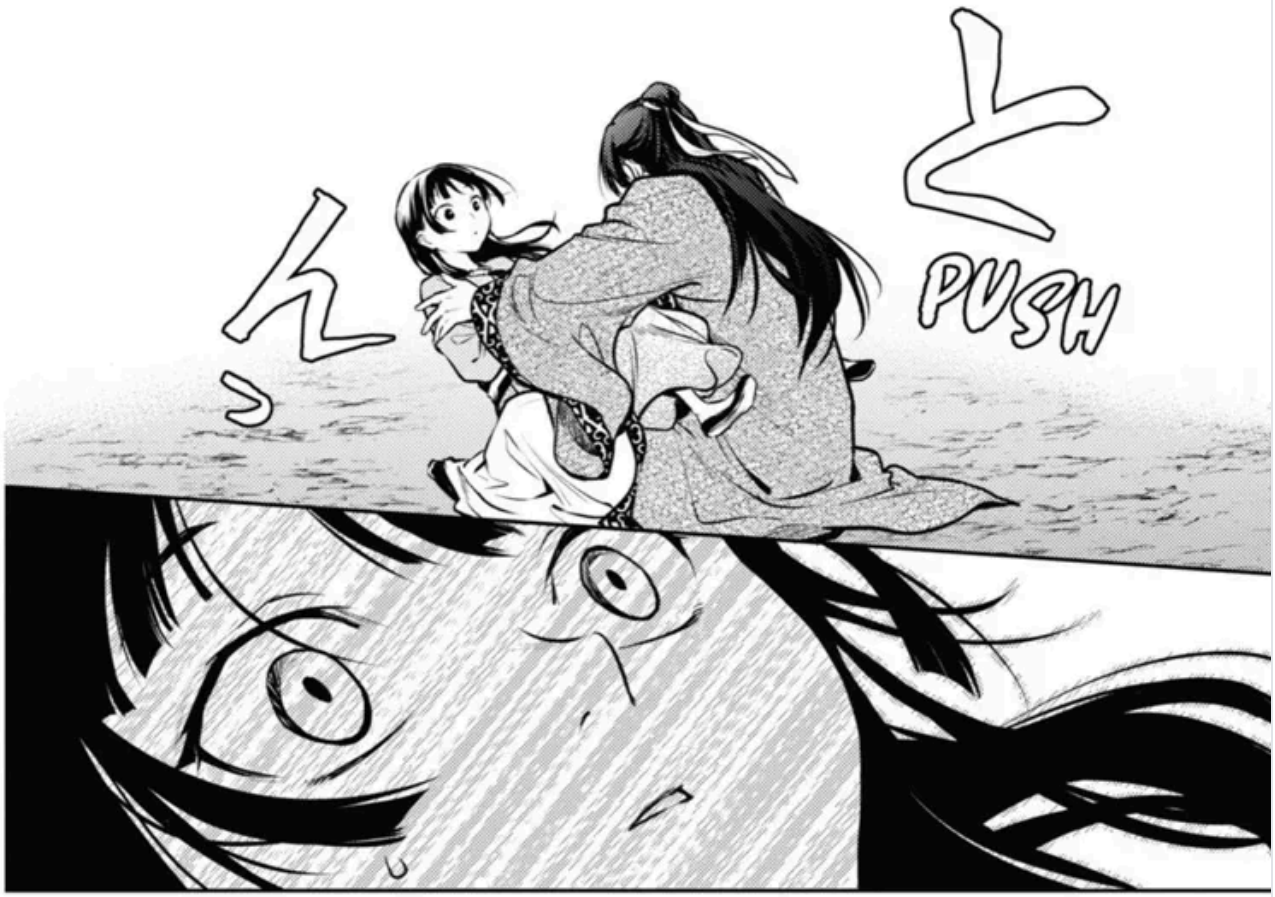
...A FROG?
UH, THAT WASN'T ACTU-ALLY A...
A FROG FELL ON MY HEAD AND MADE ME LOSE MY BALANCE.
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR STOPPING MY FALL. ARE YOU HURT?
THAT'S RIGHT. IT WAS JUST A FROG.
COME. LET'S KEEP TRYING TO GET OUT OF HERE.
FUME

...HUH?
COULD YOU LET ME GO PLEASE?
GRAB
RGH...
THIS IS SUCH A VULGAR POSITION.
TUG
TUG
TUG
WHO DID YOU JUST CALL A FROG?

...I SHALL NOT BE BEATEN!
IF THAT WASN'T A FROG JUST NOW, THEN WHAT WAS IT?
GRII
BUT ...
IIIND
WHY, I WOULD SAY THAT FROGS CAN GET KINDA LARGE DURING THIS SEASON.
FROGS ARE MUCH SMALLER THAN THAT, AREN'T THEY?
WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE
IF THAT WAS NOT A KINDA BIG FROG...
...THEN WHAT KINDA THING WAS THAT?
K-KINDA?
YES, KINDA.

HEY! WHY ARE YOU WIPING YOUR HAND OFF LIKE THAT?!
WELL, FROGS ARE RATHER DISGUSTING, YOU KNOW? THEY'RE SLIMY.
DIS... WHO ARE YOU CALLING SLIMY?!
GRRR.
SIIIGH
YES, I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.
DID I WIN?

KNOWING TOO MUCH IS NEVER A GOOD THING.
I HOPE TO AVOID LEARNING ANYTHING MORE THAN ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY IN THE FUTURE TOO.
IT SUITS ME TO BE THE KIND OF MAID WHO CAN CLAIM INNOCENCE ABOUT HER MASTER'S CARRYINGS-ON...
...AS BEFITS MY STATION.


PUSH

FWUMP
YANK

DO YOU WANT TO MAKE SURE?

JOLT
I SEEM TO HAVE CROSSED A LINE.

WH...

WHAT SHOULD I DO?
KICK HIM WHERE IT HURTS?
!
WOOF!

FWEEEEET
.....HN?! WHAT WAS THAT?
.....
WHOMP
GWEH!
WOOF!
WOOF!
SWOOSH

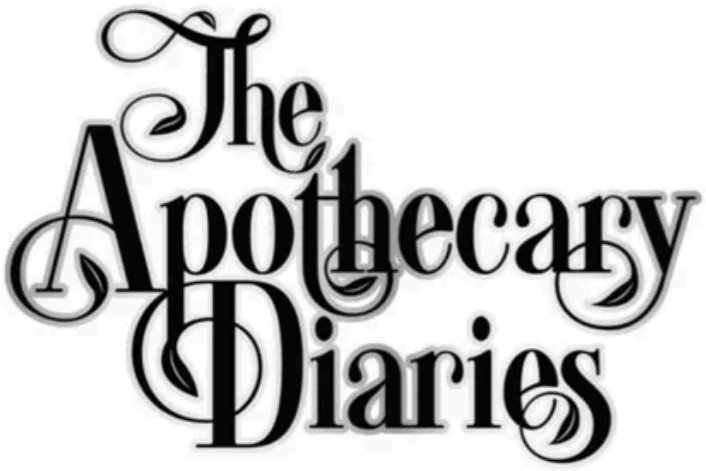
WOOF!!
HEY, WHAT'D YOU FIND?
WHY'D YOU RUN OFF LIKE THAT?
I KNOW THAT VOICE!
HUG
わし
WAG
わし
WAG
WE'RE SAVED!
SIR LI HAKUUU!!

...BUT I GOTTA ASK...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH HIM?
IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN.
AT ANY RATE, WE FELL INTO THE BASIN OF THE WATERFALL AND CLIMBED INTO A CAVE.
OH YEAH?
ALL RIGHTY, THEN.
DON'T TELL ANYONE I'M HERE.
UNDER-STOOD, SIR.

HAVE SOME MEAT.
I KNEW YOU WERE THE GOODEST OF BOYS!
THAT DOG HAS PRETTY SHARP EARS.
I WONDER IF HE'S GOING TO KEEP THIS FROM GAO SHUN AND THE OTHERS THOUGH.
DOES HE NOT WANT LI HAKU TO SAY ANYTHING BECAUSE HE WISHES TO INVESTIGATE WHAT OUR WOULD-BE ASSASSINS DO NEXT?
I THINK HE'S PRETTY GOOD AT FINDING RABBIT HOLES, AND THAT'S ABOUT IT.
TRAIN-ING?
DOES HE HAVE ANY OTHER KIND OF TRAINING?
HE'S CUTE BUT SMART FOR A DOG.
SNIFF
SNIFF

I MEAN, LORD KOSEN.
JI...
GLANCE
ちら
EUGH...
HE SOUNDS ANGRY.
WHAT?
SUCH A LORDLY MAN WITH CONFIDENCE IN HIS LOOKS...
...MUST POSSESS AN EQUALLY FINE FROG.
OF COURSE HE'D BE OUTRAGED AT ME...
...FOR COMING UP WITH SUCH AN OUTLANDISH STORY, ALL IN ORDER TO REMAIN IGNORANT ABOUT THE TRUTH.
...WELL, I SUPPOSE IT MAKES SENSE.
I DIDN'T EXPECT HIM TO DO THAT, SO I WAS STARTLED.
BUT ON SECOND THOUGHT, JINSHI WAS TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING THERE.

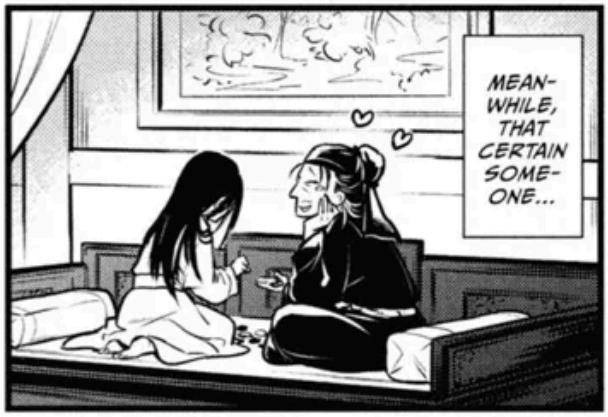
WE MAY BE ABLE...
ANYWAY, PUTTING THAT ALL ASIDE FOR NOW...
...THERE'S SOME-THING I NEED TO TELL THEM.
...TO IDENTIFY THE PEOPLE WHO SHOT AT US.
THE APOTHECARY DIARIES 12 • End


The Apothecary Diaries

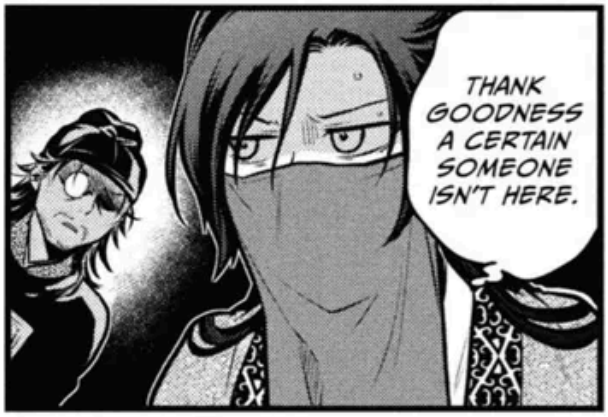
The Apothecary Diaries, Volume 12
I like horror and animals, so I had a lot of fun drawing this volume.
I want to draw even more scary things!
From the artist, Nekokurage
SPECIAL THANKS.
COMPILATION Itsuki Nanao
ASSISTANTS Kai Kazaha, Asaha, Hamano, Izumi, Shimura
ORIGINAL Natsu Hyuuga Touco Shino
My editor, you, the readers, and everyone else involved!

Author: Natsu Hyuuga
Light novel illustrator:
Touco Shino
Manga artist: Nekokurage
The editor
You, the readers
Thank you always!
Itsuki Nanao (Compilation)

THANK GOODNESS HE'S NOT HERE 1



THANK GOODNESS HE'S NOT HERE 2



Story by Itsuki Nanao *Art by* Nekokurage

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